



U.S. Department of Justice

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## **PRESS RELEASE**

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### **Federal Courts Order Seizure of 82 Website Domains Involved in Selling Counterfeit Goods As Part of DOJ and ICE Cyber Monday Crackdown - Total Includes 17 Sites Seized in Washington Region -**

WASHINGTON – Seizure orders have been executed against 82 domain names of commercial websites engaged in the illegal sale and distribution of counterfeit goods and copyrighted works as part of Operation In Our Sites II v. 2.0, Attorney General Eric Holder and Director John Morton of the Department of Homeland Security's Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) announced today.

The total includes 17 domain names that were seized in the Washington area, announced Ronald C. Machen Jr., U.S. Attorney for the District of Columbia. The announcements by Attorney General Holder, Director Morton, and U.S. Attorney Machen were made on "Cyber Monday," traditionally one of the biggest online holiday shopping days of the year.

The coordinated federal law enforcement operation targeted online retailers of a diverse array of counterfeit goods, including sports equipment, shoes, handbags, athletic apparel and sunglasses as well as illegal copies of copyrighted DVD boxed sets, music and software.

During the course of the operation, federal law enforcement agents made undercover purchases from online retailers suspected of selling counterfeit goods. In many instances, the goods were shipped directly into the United States from suppliers in other countries using international express mail. If the goods were confirmed as counterfeit or infringing, seizure orders for the domain names of the websites that sold the goods were obtained from U.S. Magistrate Judges. Individuals attempting to access the websites will now find a banner notifying them that the domain name of that website has been seized by federal authorities.

"By seizing these domain names, we have disrupted the sale of thousands of counterfeit items, while also cutting off funds to those willing to exploit the ingenuity of others for their own

personal gain,” said Attorney General Holder. “Intellectual property crimes are not victimless. The theft of ideas and the sale of counterfeit goods threaten economic opportunities and financial stability, suppress innovation and destroy jobs. The Justice Department, with the help of our law enforcement partners, is changing the perception that these crimes are risk-free with enforcement actions like the one announced today.”

“The sale of counterfeit U.S. brands on the Internet steals the creative work of others, costs our economy jobs and revenue and can threaten the health and safety of American consumers,” said ICE Director John Morton. “The protection of intellectual property is a top priority for Homeland Security Investigations and the IPR Center. We are dedicated to protecting the jobs, the income and the tax revenue that disappear when counterfeit goods are trafficked.”

“The blatant sale of counterfeit goods over the Internet during the holiday season is conduct that cannot and will not be tolerated,” said U.S. Attorney Machen. “The distribution of counterfeit goods weakens our economy, pushes substandard merchandise to consumers, and diminishes incentives for innovation and creativity that are hallmarks of U.S. industry.”

“Enforcing America's counterfeiting laws are about keeping sub-par and unsafe merchandise off our streets and keeping America as a global leader in intellectual property rights,” said John P. Torres, Special Agent in Charge for ICE, Office of Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) in Washington, D.C. “We will continue to crack down on intellectual property pirates who traffic in counterfeit products for their own profit.”

The operation builds upon Operation in Our Sites I, which was announced in June 2010. In that first action of this broader law enforcement initiative, authorities executed seizure warrants against nine domain names of websites offering pirated copies of first-run movies.

The nationwide operation was spearheaded by the National Intellectual Property Rights Coordination Center (IPR Center) led by ICE's Office of Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), in coordination with the Computer Crime and Intellectual Property Section of the Department of Justice's Criminal Division and nine U.S. Attorneys' Offices including the Southern District of New York; District of Columbia; Middle District of Florida; District of Colorado; Southern District of Texas; Central District of California; Northern District of Ohio; District of New Jersey; and the Western District of Washington. The Criminal Division's Asset Forfeiture and Money Laundering Section also provided significant assistance.

In the Washington D.C. area, numerous online purchases were made in October and November of 2010 by ICE Special Agents working with the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Columbia, Mr. Machen announced.

According to an affidavit filed in U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia, the investigators made online purchases of a variety of items from companies that were using the now-seized domain names. They included counterfeit jerseys with names and numbers of Washington sports stars; DVDs, including purported Disney collections and a fake collection of

James Bond films; handbags, watches, sunglasses and other items bearing phony designer labels; golf clubs bearing phony name brands, and other merchandise. The items subsequently were examined and determined to be counterfeit. Many had poor quality and inferior craftsmanship.

The investigation in Washington was coordinated with the IPR Center. The IPR Center is one of the U.S. government's key weapons in the fight against criminal counterfeiting and piracy. The IPR Center is led by ICE's Homeland Security Investigations and includes partners from U.S. Customs and Border Protection; the FBI; the Department of Commerce; the Food and Drug Administration; the Postal Inspection Service; the General Services Administration, Office of the Inspector General; the Naval Criminal Investigative Service; the Defense Criminal Investigative Service; the Army Criminal Investigative Division's Major Procurement Fraud Unit; the Consumer Product Safety Commission, INTERPOL and the Government of Mexico Tax Administrative Service.

The IPR Center allows law enforcement and the private sector jointly to address the growing transnational problem of counterfeit products. The IPR Center coordinates outreach to U.S. rights holders and conducts domestic and international law enforcement as well as coordinates and directs anti-counterfeiting investigations. To learn more about the IPR Center, visit [www.ice.gov](http://www.ice.gov).

The enforcement actions announced today are an example of the type of efforts being undertaken by the Department of Justice Task Force on Intellectual Property (IP Task Force). Attorney General Eric Holder created the IP Task Force to combat the growing number of domestic and international intellectual property crimes, protect the health and safety of American consumers, and safeguard the nation's economic security against those who seek to profit illegally from American creativity, innovation and hard work. The IP Task Force seeks to strengthen intellectual property rights protection through heightened criminal and civil enforcement, greater coordination among federal, state and local law enforcement partners, and increased focus on international enforcement efforts, including reinforcing relationships with key foreign partners and U.S. industry leaders. To learn more about the IP Task Force, go to [www.justice.gov/dag/iptaskforce/](http://www.justice.gov/dag/iptaskforce/).

In announcing the Washington D.C. area seizures, U.S. Attorney Machen acknowledged the outstanding work of the field agents at HSI, including Satish "Danny" Mathai, ICE National Program Manager, Field Support Unit, as well as those from the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Columbia who worked on the case, including Legal Assistant Jessica McCormick, Paralegal Specialists Rosalind Pressley and Mary Treanor, and Assistant United States Attorneys Glenn S. Leon and Diane Lucas.